

## Message Text

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73

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 EA-11 ISO-00 EB-11 COME-00 AGR-20 SWF-02

AID-20 IGA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 XMB-07 IO-14 TRSE-00 DRC-01 /200 W

----- 077505

R 121200Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 635

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 652

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ECON, CE

SUBJ: SRI LANKA SEARCHES FOR FOOD SUPPLIES

REF: COLOMBO 616 (NOTAL)

1. FOOD SITUATION HAS DETERIORATED FURTHER, LEADING PRIME MINISTER BANDARANAIKE TO HURRIEDLY DISPATCH TWO TOP-LEVEL FOOD PURCHASE MISSIONS MARCH 11, ONE TO INDIA AND USSR LED BY MAITHRIPALA SENANAYEKE, MINISTER OF IRRIGATION, POWER AND HIGHWAYS, AND THE OTHER TO PAKISTAN AND CHINA, LED BY TRADE MINISTER T.B. ILANGARATNE.

2. PRIME MINISTER HAS CAREFULLY BALANCED LEADERS OF TWO DELEGATIONS BY SENDING SPOKESMAN OF RIGHT-WING OF HER SRI LANKA FREEDOM PARTY (SLFP), SENANAYAKE, TO MOSCOW AND LEADING LEFT-WINGER OF SLFP, T.B. ILANGARATNE, TO PEKING. HASTE WITH WHICH MISSIONS ORGANIZED DEMONSTRATES EXTREME ANXIETY GOVT NOW FEELS OVER PROSPECTS FOR SEVERE FOOD SHORTAGES AND RESULTANT POLITICAL UNREST IN NEXT  
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SIX WEEKS. FAILURE OF FOOD SHIPS TO ARRIVE ON TIME HAS

CREATED SITUATION IN WHICH GOVT MAY VERY WELL  
BE UNABLE MEET WHAT IT FEELS IS MINIMUM FOOD RATION.  
AS RESULT, GSL IS MAKING DESPERATE ATTEMPTS TO OBTAIN  
FOOD SUPPLIES.

3. RE MISSION SENT TO AUSTRALIA FEB 28 (REFTEL),  
GOVT OFFICIAL REPORTS ATTEMPT TO PURCHASE UP TO  
100,000 TONS OF AUSTRALIAN WHEAT AT ANY PRICE ON ONE  
YEARS CREDIT OR BETTER REMAINS IN DOUBT BECAUSE AUSTRALIA  
APPEARS UNWILLING PROVIDE SUPPLIES ON CREDIT TERMS  
ACCEPTABLE TO GSL. FOREIGN EXCHANGE OFFICIALS ADMIT THAT  
FROM SRI LANKA PERSPECTIVE REPAYMENT CONSIDERATIONS AND  
IMPACT ON BALANCE OF PAYMENTS SITUATION ARE NOW CLEARLY  
SECONDARY.

4. RUSSIANS AND CEYLONSE PREVIOUSLY NEGOTIATED FOR UP  
TO 50,000 TONS WHEAT, BUT AGREEMENT WAS NEVER CONCLUDED.  
IF RUSSIANS NOW PROVIDE WHEAT, IT WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO  
BE MILLED IN INDIA BECAUSE OF INADEQUATE CEYLONSE  
MILLING CAPACITY. CEYLONSE EXPECT THAT UNDER PRESENT  
ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS RUSSIANS WILL BE FORTH-  
COMING. EXPECTATION COINCIDES WITH TALK IN OFFICIAL CIRCLES  
HERE OF NEED TO REVIEW STATE OF BILATERAL RELATIONS  
WITH USSR AND IMPROVE THEM.

5. ILANGARATNE MISSION HOPES TO OBTAIN INCREASED RICE  
SUPPLIES FROM PAKISTAN AND CHINA. IT SEEMS LIKELY HE  
WILL ALSO TRY TO EXPEDITE SHIPMENT OF RICE FOR WHICH  
ARRANGEMENTS HAVE ALREADY BEEN CONCLUDED.

6. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, EMBASSY STRONGLY RECOMMENDS  
THAT PURCHASE AUTHORIZATION FOR REMAINING 10,000 TONS  
WHEAT FLOUR ALLOCATED TO SRI LANKA UNDER FY 1974  
PL 480 PROGRAM BE ISSUED NOW. PRIME MINISTER IS STRUGGLING  
WITH WHAT SHE PERCEIVES TO BE DESPERATE FOOD SITUATION  
FRAUGHT WITH DANGEROUS POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS. ANNOUNCE-  
MENT OF RELEASE OF WHEAT FLOUR SUPPLIES WILL HAVE STRONG  
IMPACT BY DEMONSTRATING CONTINUING USG INTEREST IN SRI  
LANKA'S PROBLEMS, AN INTEREST SOME HERE ARE BEGINNING TO  
DOUBT. ALTHOUGH THESE SUPPLIES WILL NOT ARRIVE IN TIME  
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TO ALLEVIATE CURRENT DIFFICULTIES, THEY WOULD ARRIVE BEFORE  
NEXT SEVERE SHORTAGE OF FOOD SUPPLIES EXPECTED EARLY IN  
FY 75.  
VAN HOLLEN

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NNN

## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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